Income-Tax exemption has been granted to the contributions for earthquake relief and rehabilitation.

The people of this country have always shown great fortitude in facing natural calamities and mobilising the human and material resources for succour to the victims. They contributed very generously to the relief and rehabilitation efforts of the Government of Maharashtra. In fact voluntary work by a larg number of agencies public and private played a crucial role in alleviating the misery of the people. The spontaneous offer of money, material, expertise for relief and rehabilitation from a wide range of foreign donors which include foreign governments, UN bodies, non-Government Organisations and individuals and the compassion expressed by them have proved the solidarity and innate humanism of the international community in times of extreme crisis like this. It was very touching to see even the groups of school going children and the people from vulnerable sections making small but extremely valuable contribution. I am sure this House would join me in expressing our deep sense of gratitude to all of them.

We are now faced with the problem of providing appropriate rehabilitation—social, economic and psychological to the victim's families, disabled persons, destitute women and orphaned children. The Ministry of Finance is already negotiating with the World Bank for assistance for a comprehensive reconstruction package, proposing an investment of over Rs. 1,000 crores. A World Bank team has pre-appraised the project report for an emergency reconstruction credit. The Board of the bank is expected to consider the proposal for final approval early. Private donor agencies have started construction of dwelling units and community facilities in 20 villages with the permission of the Government of Maharashtra.

One of the matters to be firmed up regarding construction of dwelling units, other buildings and infrastructure is the technology and materials to be used in reconstruction so as to withstand the impact of possible future earthquakes. Government of India have appointed an Advisory Group to consider the question and its report has just been received.

The area affected by the calamity had been classified seismically and Zone-I which is least vulnerable to moderate and great earthquakes. This assumption has now been belied and, therefore, the need for a re-look at the seismic zoning classification especially in peninsular India. Prime Minister has already announced Government's intention to undertake this review speedily. In this connection, a Committee set up by the Government of India to look into the inadequacies of the existing seismic survey reports and to recommend corrective measures has submitted its reports which is under consideration. Besides, a Task Force to examaine the need for seismic instrumentation and an Expert Committee for updating the project document on seismic observations are already at work.

While a large number of dignitaries, both Indian and foreign as also teams of officers from Central Government have been visting areas and giving up the benefit of their advice and feedback, I have had the most recent opportunity of personally visiting the area interacting with the affected persons and reviewing the relief and rehabilitation programmes with the State Government. I wish to record my appreciation of the good work done by the State Government, Armed Forces, non-Government Organisations and public spirited individuals. While conveying my heart felt sympathies for the affected people, I wish to assure this House that we will spare no efforts in meeting the challenges of rehabilitation.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Withdrawal of Strike by the State Unions of Postal Employees

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM) : I am happy to inform the Honourable Members of this

House that the strike by the Postal employees and ED Agents stands withdrawn with effect from 5.00 P.M. of 10 December 1993. Having regard to the Honourable Members' concern expressed in this House, I had personally appealed to them to call off the agitation.

The strike has been called off without preconditions and the various pending demands of the Unions will be discussed with them. The package of benefits agreed to before the commencement of the strike will be given to them and orders will be issued immediately. Such of the demands as would be beyond the competence of my Ministry would be recommended for sympathetic consideration in the concerned Ministries at-an early date.

I have agreed to increase the interim relief from Rs. 35 per month announced earlier to Rs. 50 per month to every ED Agent. Furthermore, a few benefits have been slightly expanded to reflect the wishes of the employees better.

I would like to assure the Honourable Members and the citizens of this country through this House, that our efforts to give better postal services as well as to grant the justified demands of our employees will continue. I am sure that the entire Postal fraternity will make sincere efforts to restore normalcy and maintain the high standards of postal services as they have been rendering in the past.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SYED SIBTEY RAZI): The clarifications, if any, on this statement would be taken up on some other day.

MESSAGES FROM THE LOK SABHA—contd.

(1) The Supreme Court Judges (Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 1993

(2) The High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 1993

(3) The Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Amendment Bill, 1993

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Sir, I have to report to the House the following messages received from th Lok Sabha, signed by the Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha:

(1)

"In accordance with the provisions of rule 96 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, I am directed to enclose the Supreme Court Judges (Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 1993, as passed by Lok Sabha at its sitting held on the 11th December, 1993.

The Speaker has certified that this Bill is a Money Bill within the meaning of article 110 of the Constitution of India."

(2)

In accordance with the provisions of rule 96 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, I am directed to enclose the High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 1993, as passed by Lok Sabha at its sitting held on the 11th December, 1993.

The Speaker has certified that this Bill is a Money Bill within the meaning of article 110 of the Constitution of India."

(3)

"I am directed to infrom you that the public premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Amendment Bill, 1992, which was passed by Rajya Sabha at its sitting held on the 16th July, 1992, has been passed by Lok Sabha at its sitting held on the 11th December, 1993, with the following amendments:—

Enacting Formula

1. Page 1, line 1,—

for "Forty-third" *substitute* "Forty-fourth".